

RESURRECTION FOR THE JUST AND THE UNJUST

NO. 3346

A SERMON
PUBLISHED ON THURSDAY, MARCH 20, 1913
DELIVERED BY C. H. SPURGEON
AT THE METROPOLITAN TABERNACLE, NEWINGTON
ON THURSDAY EVENING, JUNE 4, 1868

“There shall be a resurrection both for the just and the unjust.”
Acts 24:15

THE heathen had, somehow or other, spelled out the truth that the soul of man is immortal. Almost all their religions implied this and some of their sages plainly taught it. But never had they imagined that this immortality might belong also to the body.

The doctrine of the resurrection from the dead was peculiar to Christianity. It was so novel and it seemed, at first, to be so absurd that when men heard the apostles speak of such a resurrection they mocked and laughed them to scorn as fools. They called Paul “a babbler,” because of this. They believed he must be mad. Had they not seen the body sicken and die? Had they not marked it in various stages of decay? Did they not know that it was frequently dissolved into small dust, scattered to the manifold winds of heaven, or that its fragments mingled with the waves of the sea, or that its various members were torn by wild beasts and could they, therefore, imagine it to be credible that any sane person could believe that the human body would rise again from the dead?

Yet Paul believed this and this he preached—that there would be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust, not that the just and the unjust would merely live as to their souls, but that their bodies would be restored from the grave and that a resurrection, as well as an immortality, should be the entail of every man of woman born, whatever his character might be.

Now, this is the great doctrine of the Christian faith, which we do not doubt, but joyously accept. Our Lord’s body, that same body in real identity which was nailed to the tree and laid in the tomb for three days—that same body came to life again, with the nail prints visible—into which Thomas was invited to put his finger, with the mark of the spear, into which the same doubting apostle was asked to thrust his hand. He proved Himself to be not merely a spirit, but a solid, tangible, corporeal existence, for He said, “Handle me, and see; a spirit hath not flesh and bones as ye see me have.”

And although He appeared in the room, the doors being shut, and thus proved that His body had lost some of the properties of coarse matter, yet, at the same time, He took a piece of flesh and of honeycomb and did eat before them, and let them see that it was His very self who had hung upon the cross and died there at Calvary.

And so shall it be with us. Though by death our bodies shall lose some of their qualities, which we shall all be only too glad to lose, though their corruptions and weaknesses shall all be laid aside, yet my body and yours in definite identity, each for itself, shall upstart from its bed of dust and silent clay, and enter into the rest that remains where Jesus dwells before the throne of God. Behold at this present, “The whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together, until now, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body.”

My great purpose tonight, beloved, is to speak on the majestic fact that the just and the unjust are to live on in a resurrection state. I am not going to debate, discuss, argue as to the fact of it, but assuming your belief in God’s inspired Word, declare a few thoughts which that sublime truth seems to raise in one’s mind. I shall treat the truth as though it were a lantern and shall look at some of the rays of divine light that stream from it on all sides.

And first of all—

I. WHAT AN ENNOBLING EFFECT THIS TRUTH HAS UPON US!

Observe the effect it has, first of all, *upon our bodies*. Paul elsewhere calls the body “this vile body,” and so it is in comparison with what it is to be by-and-by. But yet, if this body has been redeemed with the precious blood of Christ, and if the Holy Spirit dwells in our bodies, as we are taught in Scripture, and if these bodies are to be partakers of a pure and sinless immortality—then what noble things these otherwise vile bodies become! So noble, my brethren and sisters, that it becomes us to guard them sacredly, as sacred things.

Now, our bodies may be defiled, but shall they be defiled after being washed in pure water and after being given up to Christ? You know how they may be defiled. The apostle speaks very plainly concerning certain carnal lusts whereby members of Christ may be made members of all manner of iniquity. From these things we fly—they should not be so much as named among you, as becomes saints.

Our bodies may be defiled by eating and drinking, unless in the eating and the drinking we glorify God. We may by excess in either way bring ourselves into conditions in which the mind will not act and I believe, mark you, that gluttony is as much a sin in the sight of God as drunkenness, and that, in fact, any eating or drinking which makes us unfit for communion with God becomes sinful at once. Any passing beyond that boundary, whatever it may be, whether in eating or in drinking, becomes sinful. The body is clogged and defiled, and who would have it so when it has been purchased by Christ’s precious blood and is to dwell with Him forever?

The body, too, may be defiled by outward adornments, for the Holy Spirit has expressly warned Christian men and women against these. There is a holy adornment that we speak of—that of a meek and a quiet spirit—but when men and women hang upon themselves their jewels and their ornaments of an ungodly profession, they sin against the plain precepts of the Word, and they really defile the bodies that belong to Christ.

So every bowing of the knee to that to which I ought not to bow, every yielding of this body of mine to write what is not true, every motion of my tongue to speak that which is not upright and according to the fear of God, every movement of these feet to take me where it is not good for me to be—defiles the body.

So there are ten thousand ways in which the temple of God may be defiled, but I say again, that with the thought that this body is to live forever and ever, we ought to guard with sacred care these members of Christ. The body that has been bought with His blood—that is to sleep on His bosom, that is to be awakened in His likeness, that is to dwell with Him forever, molded after His own image—take care of that body and keep it consecrated unto the Lord.

And while this ennobles the body, let me say that *it also ennobles the entire man*. If man be a creature, if he only be first among animals, though the most highly organized of all the vertebrate creatures, and if, when he dies, that is the end of him, as that might be of a sheep or a dog, then, looking up to the stars and thinking of man as a mere beast, you need not say with David, “Lord, what is man?” You know what he is. You have got your answer—and a gloomy and a melancholy answer it is.

But if man is to live forever and ever, what a noble creature he becomes! And mark you, men are ready enough to admit this of some of their fellow creatures—kings, and queens, and princes, and senators, and men who have heaped up their gold—but when it comes to this, that the beggar, being immortal, is to be honored, they do not like it. I would that men would remember that the same Bible that says, “Honour the king,” also says, “Honour all men”—that is, be they what they may.

But men must honor people’s coats—not the men. Or they honor their carriages, or they honor their sovereigns, but they do not honor the men. And yet, in truth, seeing that man is to live forever, that his existence in the future is coeval with the life of God, every man becomes a strange and wondrous thing. If you could pile up a mountain of gold, a huge pyramid of it, and then by the side of it a pyramid of precious stones, yet all these put together could not be valued with the soul of the pauper’s child that has been in the workhouse from its very birth. Despise not, then, despise not a man made in the image of

God—a man redeemed with the blood of Christ, a man immortal, a man a mystery if he be immortal—a mystery of mysteries.

As I begin to look at him in the light of my text, which is far above all the fictitious surroundings to which men attach so much weight, he appears to me now to be a greater being than stars or suns, for these may die out and their brightness become extinct—but here is a star that shall shine on forever, a sun that shall flash its beams throughout eternity.

We must not, therefore, if we are poor, broken, despised, ourselves at once go into sin as though we were too mean to be capable of excellence. We must not begin to say, “I cannot be saved—I am so illiterate, I am so obscure.” Why not? If you are not saved, you will have to live forever in misery. Can you contemplate that?

You are endowed with an immortality from which it is impossible for you to escape. In that respect, by that wondrous gift, God has put you on an elevated position and I do pray that you may look at it as such—may, by His grace, not fling yourselves away, nor trifle with yourselves, nor do the devil’s bidding—but seek Him who has promised, in His Word, that they that seek Him shall find Him.

Thus much on that one thought, and now a second one. If there be another state, as you know there is, for body and soul—

II. WHAT A LIGHT THAT CASTS UPON THIS PRESENT LIFE!

How little it makes it! How great it makes it! How little! Well, if I suffer, today, if my life should be made weary through weakness of body, or if it should be bitter through heart-toil, or if it should be severe through stern poverty, yet you know how we sing—

“The way may be rough, but it cannot be long.”

And again, we sometimes sing—

“An hour with my God will make up for it all.”

These light afflictions, which are but for a moment, are not worthy to be compared with the weight of glory which shall be revealed in us. Looking at the trials of this present life, and comparing and contrasting them with the splendor, glory, and eternity of the life to come, they are not worth a thought. They disappear, and we sing as we wade through the midst of them, knowing that it is so written that through much tribulation we must inherit the kingdom.

When we look back from the hilltops of heaven, I suppose life itself will seem to be infinitesimal. Those great troubles of ours will look like pin’s pricks and we shall almost laugh to think that we should have weighed these burdens and thought them so heavy when they were light as feathers after all. I think we shall, as Watts says—

*“With transporting joys recount
The labors of our feet.”*

We shall say, one to another, “How could we have been so unbelieving?” What was there, after all, in our trials to depress us so much? Our sufferings were not worth a thought when once compared with those of our Master. “His way was much rougher and darker than mine, did Christ my Lord suffer, and did I repine?” Why was it that with such blessed help, such rich promises, such covenant blessings, and with the everlasting arms underneath us, yet nevertheless we were faint and ready to die?

Oh, brethren, this world seems so little when we think of the world to come. Now, you who have been envious of the rich little think how soon they will be as poor as you. You who have sometimes thought how richly you were favored—think how fame is nothing but a breath—and how soon it is gone.

Princes will sleep side by side with the slave. The great conqueror will not be distinguished from the victims of his ambition. The greatest millionaire will be no richer than you. Both alike, you came naked

into this world and naked you return to the dust. So must it be. Oh! it is all little. "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity." The big round world becomes a bubble and it vanishes, and as a puff of smoke the glory of the world departs.

And yet in this respect, I say, how great this present life becomes. You know how our poet puts it—

*"Great God! on what a slender thread
Hang everlasting things;
The eternal state of all the dead
Upon life's feeble strings."*

This life is the mother of the life to come. There is a resurrection for the just, and all the glory which the just shall inherit will be but the outcome of that immortal life which they received here. There is a resurrection for the unjust, and the worm undying, and the fire that shall never be quenched. And all these will be just the development and open revealing of the character which they acquired here on earth. Living in sin is the germ of living forever in perdition. Believing in Jesus is the root of rejoicing forever in glorious immortality.

Now, sirs, see you not that life is not a thing to be played with, not a heap of counters that a child may toss to and fro, not the mere spray on the great sea of eternity? You must not joke and talk about it, as though it were a thing to be despised—but come up and look at it with all its solemn possibilities and results—and live the life of sober men, live the life of men who have peered beyond the veil and seen some of the momentous issues of this fleeting existence.

Henceforth, live while you live, earnestly, as in the sight of God, the Judge of the quick and the dead. Yes! let the light of the resurrection stream over the whole of your present life, to make its great things for the present to become little—to make those things which otherwise might be little, which have a reference to eternity, become great in your esteem.

But I will not tarry on this and therefore pass on to the thought—

III. WHAT ENCOURAGEMENT THIS OFFERS TO US!

To think that there is a resurrection and another life! What! Were it worth our while to toil here in the service of Christ, often unrewarded, and very frequently misrepresented and persecuted for what we do, if there were not a place where the reward of grace would be given and where the mistakes of earth would all be set right?

"Therefore," says the apostle, "beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." It might be in vain here, but forasmuch as there is a resurrection, your labor is not in vain in the Lord. If we win souls for Christ, it often happens that some of those whom we thought were saved go back into perdition—many of those who are really saved walk disorderly—others are ungrateful to their spiritual parents and turn aside to crooked ways.

But if our record is on high, and we do not look to our success for our reward, but to our Master, then we may be stedfast, unmovable, always abounding in work. You who are doing something for Jesus Christ in the school, or in any other department of labor, if you look upon your rewards as the result, you may, perhaps, have very few conversions and you may go toiling on very heavily. But if you will look beyond all present results to the great Taskmaster's blessed smile, and think you hear Him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant"—when you see Him reward you not according to your success, but according to the measure of grace which you use faithfully in His service—when you see that, you will pluck up courage, you will not be of heavy heart, you will be instant in season, out of season.

The same thing is an encouragement under suffering. For this the martyrs cheerfully gave themselves up to their tormentors, not accepting deliverance, because they looked for a better resurrection. This it was that made them brave to meet the lions in the amphitheater, or to lie and silently rot in the dismal dungeons of the Roman Emperors. This it was that made Smithfield glorious, as the

saints in their chariots of fire clapped their hands and ascended to the skies. They were, of all men, most miserable if, in this life, only they had hope. They were, of all men, most insane to fling away their lives if this world were all.

But because there is another and a better land, to die for Jesus became a glorious thing, and they did it, being not amazed, trembling not, but dying with greater grandeur about them than that with which most men have learned to surround their living. And now, you that today are poor, or today are scoffed at, you who, though trying to follow Christ, find it a hard path, you who at home have little to encourage you and comfort you—recollect this is not your rest.

If you were to have fifty years of your present trouble, well, it will be as nothing compared with the eternal weight of glory. Have patience. Ask your Master to give you His patience. Pray of the Holy Ghost to work in you holy virtue, that after you have endured awhile, you may inherit the promise. Remember that there must first be the service before there can be the reward, and even under the economy of grace—in which we are not saved by works, but saved by the merit of Jesus, yet the Lord will have His servants first of all be made perfect through suffering before He admits them to their everlasting rest.

Be of good courage, then. He will strengthen your heart. This is not your rest, but it remains for you, and you shall inherit it by-and-by.

Passing on again, for I only dwell for a moment upon each thought—this fact of our rising again and living forever suggests to us—

IV. WHAT OUGHT TO BE THE ONE CONCERN OF LIFE.

What shall this be for the saint—what for the sinner? If I am to live again as a child of God, if my salvation is accomplished, if my sin be blotted out, and I am really saved, then *let me serve my God with all my might*, seeing what a blessed immortality He has prepared for me.

Slaves work when they hear the whip crack, but the children of God are not slaves—they are not under bondage—they work from a very different motive. They have no fear of hell, no fear of losing heaven. When their faith is constantly fixed upon the merits of their Savior, they know that their warfare is accomplished, that their iniquity is pardoned, that their salvation is secure beyond all risks, through the everlasting covenant, the inimitable purpose and the divine promise of the Father in Christ Jesus.

Because their salvation is secure and because it leads to such a blessed immortality, they burn with fervent love and passionate gratitude towards Him who has done so much for them. Gratitude ought to be, and I believe it is, in the heart the most powerful force in human motive. Love—what shall equal it? Its wheels move until the axles grow hot with speed. Love has an impetuous force about it. Many waters cannot quench it, neither can the floods drown it. What love we owe to Him who died, that when we die we may live again, who rose that we might rise, and made a pathway to the skies that we might follow Him, even to His throne.

“He lives, the great Redeemer lives,” and beckons us to come and live with Him. When our bodies must for a while see corruption, His voice, which shall be the trumpet sound, shall call us from the beds wherein we slumber, to abide with Him forever. Let us love Him, then. Let us be up and doing to find the lost ones that are His sheep, to find His pieces of money that are now in the dust, to discover our prodigal brethren that are still going astray.

Shall we ask for rest when rest remains? Shall we escape from toil when toil is the only exposition of our love? Shall we bemoan our sufferings when sufferings give us opportunities of proving our affection to Him? If the saint in heaven could wish himself back again, he almost might—if he could win a soul by tarrying here a little longer.

If any one of yonder white-robed hosts could wish to be on earth, surely it might be to occupy the place of an earnest evangelist, or of a fervent Sunday school teacher, or of any other who is a soul-winner for Jesus. I must confess I do not envy Gabriel his crown, when God gives me souls. I have, then, thought that I would rather be here to talk with you, and point you to my Master’s cross, than be up

there and cast my crown at His feet—for surely there can be no joy in heaven greater than the joy of doing the Master's will in winning souls for Him.

Do not let us throw away our opportunities for doing this. Some of you do not, perhaps, think of using them. In your business, in the acquaintances that Providence puts in your way—you have opportunities in all these things of bearing your witness for your Master. I pray you to see them and seize them. They will soon pass, and in the silent chamber, when you are about to enter into another world, if regret shall mingle with the holy peace that then shall gild your brow, it will be this regret, “I wish I had served Him better, whom I am so soon to see. I wish I had more to take to Him who gave Himself up for me.”

Surely you will bid “good-bye” to friends with reluctance, if you have never warned them to escape from the wrath to come. And those dear children—it will bring hotter tears into your eyes to leave them, if you leave them unsaved, because you did not plead and wrestle with them for their salvation. So live, dear friends, that when you come to die, there shall be nothing left undone, and you may go and feel that through grace you have been what you are, and unto God be the praise. But you have not neglected the lifework which your Master gave you.

Now, I said that this text should make the unforgiven sinner *think*—and so it should, and very earnestly, too, because there will be a resurrection of the unjust as well as of the just. If you who are now living in sin were really to die and perish like horses, there might be some sort of excuse found for choosing the pleasures of this life as being all in all. After all, if there is no other world, I do not know but what the Epicurean philosophy is the right one—“Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.”

If we are only to live in this world, it is the part of wisdom to enjoy one's self as much as possible. I do not know, but that even then a man would be justified in running into vice, because that does not bring enjoyment—it is sure to entail, even in this life, the most serious results. But still, at the bottom, that old Greek philosopher had hit upon the true philosophy of life if this life were all—“Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.”

But if there be a life to come, as there is, then what a fool Epicurus was, and what nonsense his philosophy becomes! Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we do *not* die, or if we do, yet we live again, and in the light of living again, why, eating and drinking seems such dreadful trumpery, such driveling idiocy, that a man cannot tolerate it either from philosopher or from a fool.

Oh! if you are to live forever, you who are living without thinking of your God, what sort of life must the next one be for you? You to whom, even now, to think of God is an irksome burden, what will the next world be for you? You believe that Book, you dare not doubt it. And that Book tells you that “except ye repent of your sin, ye shall all likewise perish.”

Moreover, it tells you that there is no salvation out of Christ, but “he that believeth in him shall be saved; but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed on the Son of God.” According to this Book of God's perfectly revealed mind, there is reserved for you, if you remain impenitent, a “fearful-looking-for of judgment and fiery indignation.” Fear not him who can destroy the body—only fear Him who can cast both soul and body into hell.

Why do you give so much attention to this world that is so soon to be left, and the eternal things are quite forgotten or despised by you? I do not feel as if I could plead this with you, with any sort of force or eager earnestness because it is really so plain that you, in your sins, must see it for yourselves. You surely, surely, as sober-minded men—and I know there are some here who are accustomed to think—you must feel that the living throughout millions of ages ought to be of greater concern than living from week to week, or even year to year.

We think a man is very foolish that lives from hand to mouth, and never cares to make any provision for a rainy day, but what an ass that man must be, who makes no provision for that rainy day when the tempest of heaven's retribution shall beat upon his naked soul, and he shall have no shelter and no way of escape.

And if a man has grown aged and yet neglects eternity, if his constitution is being gradually undermined, and yet the everlasting things are despised, if he has had solemn warnings that he must soon depart, if he has seen old companions, one by one, taken to the grave, and he still trifles away his time, lingering upon the brink of fate—what folly is this and in what words can I describe it?

Blessed Spirit, take away this folly and make men wise that they may be saved! Let this be our one great concern, with holy care to make our calling and election sure, that when the Master comes we may not be found castaways, but may be gathered with His people.

And now for the last point. I do not know whether you will set much store by this last thought, but it is this—considering that our friends whom we talk with every day, with whom we go up and down to the market, and to the place of worship—considering that they are to live forever—

V. SHOULD WE NOT ALTER A GREAT DEAL OF OUR PRESENT BEHAVIOR UNDER THE POWER OF THIS TRUTH?

What kind of behavior does this majestic fact inculcate towards our fellow men and women? Well, I think that Christian people ought always to *act to one another as immortal beings*. Now, I know some who belong to one denomination who will scarcely speak to those of another section of Christ's one church. Well, well, well—if you both ever get to heaven, you will have to dwell together. Yet it seems as though you cannot live together on earth without bickering.

Why can't you make up your minds to *differ from each other, but always in a Christian spirit*? I think, if I knew I had to live with a man, forever, one thing I should like to do would be to tell him perfectly honestly, with sincere love, all the truth I knew, and I ought to be willing to hear from him all the truth he thought he knew.

I would not like him to say to me, "Now, you must not hold your views strongly—you must not speak of them or try to propagate them." That would be as bad as telling me I must sin against God by restraining the light which He had given me. Neither ought I to say to him, "You shall not be free to hold and disseminate your views," for that would be to take upon myself a responsibility which does not belong to me.

But each holding our separate views and contending earnestly for what we believe to be "the faith once for all delivered to the saints," might we not thus exercise an honesty which we shall look back upon in heaven with joy, and at the same time a brotherly kindness which will be a sweet reflection even beyond the stars?

If any two of you have fallen out, even about the faith, go your way and agree tonight. You have got to live together forever—do not quarrel. You who are relatives, especially, let not the sun go down upon your wrath, but as you are birds in the same nest, children of one family, and one with God, do not fall out, and if you have, make it up at once, and let holy Christian forgiveness reign and rule.

You see, God will not put a partition between you in heaven. I do not believe they will practice any kind of strict communion up there. I do not believe there will be any separate bench for any who would like to have that kind of thing, but that the whole company of saints will have communion with each other and with their common Lord, their glorious risen Head. And that it will be their delight, all washed from all their imperfections and infirmities, to eat bread together in the kingdom of God, world without end.

Well, let us have large hearts and brotherly kindness—not keeping back our views, for that would be to sin, but holding with a firm hand everything which we have received from the Holy Ghost, and yet loving the whole household of faith. If we were to die, and there were no life to come, then we might be foolish and unchristian enough to be forever squabbling and bickering, but if, after death, we are to live forever in the same place of glory, let us so behave to one another that we shall not be ashamed or embarrassed to meet each other there.

And so with regard to the unconverted. Oh! Christian people, try to *think of all the unconverted people with whom you have to meet as immortal souls*. Your servant girl that nurses and loves your child—you may, perhaps, never have thought of but as a servant girl, but she is an immortal soul as

much as the Queen on the throne. Or it may be the man who comes to do odd jobs about the house and who blacks your shoes—you never thought of him, probably, but as a worker, yet he—even he—shall outlast the stars.

And all those working men, and women, and girls who come streaming into your yard or factory, who weave at your looms, toil in your workrooms, stand at your printing press or at the book-binding, or in your builder's shop—all these and the myriads engaged in commercial and professional life, you may hitherto, perhaps, have only thought of them as two-legged machines to earn so many shillings for you and draw so many less from you every week.

Ay! but now just think again. They are living for immortality, as well as yourselves. Will you try so to act with them that if their funeral knell were heard and they were gone, the voice of conscience might not have to torment you with this suggestion, "You neglected their souls. You did not do to them what you ought to have done to them. You kept back from their immortal part that which alone could make them blessed in this life and in the life to come."

'Tis but a simple thought, and yet if I leave it with you, and God the Holy Spirit blesses it, it may be a very blessed thought to some whom you know not of today. Remember that all you see in the streets, and all you see in the house, and all you see here tonight are all immortal, and shall live again, and so treat them as such, looking forward to the time when you will have to give an account whether you have abused or used graciously the opportunities which your Master placed in your way.

And now may the good Lord keep our thoughts heavenward and bless us in them, for His name's sake. Amen.

EXPOSITION BY C. H. SPURGEON

PSALM 73

Here you have the psalmist in a fainting fit. He has allowed the flesh to conquer the spirit. The observant eye of reason has for a while rendered dim the clear vision of faith.

Verse 1. *Truly God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart.*

That must be true. Whatever we have seen or felt, it cannot be doubted but what God must become a good God to His own people, "Such as are of a clean heart."

2-3. *But as for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the wicked.*

I began to envy those whom God hates and to think that it would be better for me to have been one of them.

4. *For there are no pangs in their death: but their strength is firm.*

Their unbelief helps them to die in peace, mocking God even to the last.

5-8. *They are not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men. Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain; violence covereth them as a garment. Their eyes stand out with fatness: they have more than heart could wish. They are corrupt, and speak wickedly concerning oppression: they speak loftily.*

They justify themselves in treading others down. They laud it over others. They bully them. They rob them. They crush them, yet speak as if they had a perfect right to do so.

9. *They set their mouth against the heavens, and their tongue walketh through the earth.*

Leaving nobody alone, sparing no character, however pure.

10-11. *Therefore his people return hither: and waters of a full cup are wrung out to them. And they say, How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the most High?*

They get to doubt the personality of God. If they will not precisely say that there is no God, yet they go as near to it as they can. They come to what is about the same thing. They have a God who does not know and who does not perceive.

12. Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world; they increase in riches.

And this is what the good man said,—

13-14. Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocence. For all day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning.

“Is this all I am to get by my righteousness? Is this the reward of following after God—to be whipped as soon as I wake, and to be sent to bed sore with grief?”

15. If I say, I will speak thus; behold I should offend against the generation of thy children.

So he did not say what he thought. Some have said, “If you think so, you may as well say so.” But not so. You might as well say if you have a match, you may as well burn your house down. Bad thought is bad to yourself, but it ends there—turn it into words, and tell it to others, and it may do infinite mischief.

16-17. When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me; Until I went into the sanctuary of God; then understood I their end.

He went and hid himself in his God. He got near his God. It does not mean that he went to some place of worship, but that he went to the God whom he worshipped—hid himself in his God.

18. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places; thou castedst them down into destruction.

*“On hills of ice I see them stand,
While flaming billows roll below,”*

melting down their foundation.

19-22. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! they are utterly consumed with terrors. As a dream when one awaketh; so, O Lord, when thou awakest, thou shalt despise their image. Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my veins. So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee.

It is a man of God that talks thus about himself. He feels that he had got to act and think as a beast might do, for a beast only calculates things according to time present—it crops the grass, and is satisfied, and lies down. But an immortal man ought to take a wider sweep and range in his thought, and not merely think of today and of this present life, but of the end of time and of the eternity that lies beyond this present mortal state. And because he had failed to do so, he calls himself foolish and ignorant, and says—

23-28. Nevertheless I am continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterwards receive me to glory. Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever. For, lo, they that are far from thee shall perish: thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee. But it is good for me to draw near to God: I have put my trust in the Lord GOD, that I may declare all thy works.

He finds all his comfort in his God. He comes to the conclusion that, whatever the portion of the ungodly may be, his is infinitely better than theirs, because they have not God, and he has God, who is all in all.

Taken from The C. H. Spurgeon Collection, Version 1.0, Ages Software. Only necessary changes have been made, such as correcting spelling errors, some punctuation usage, capitalization of deity pronouns, and minimal updating of a few archaic words. The content is unabridged. Additional Bible-based resources are available at www.spurgeongems.org.